



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

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**FORMER TREASURER OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO CHURCH FEDERAL
CREDIT UNION SENTENCED TO 37 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR
STEALING OVER \$100,000 IN CHURCH MEMBERS' SAVINGS**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOSEPH M. DEMAREST JR., the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's New York Field Division ("FBI"), announced that CHINITHIA BILLS, a/k/a "Chinithia Hamilton," a/k/a "Cynthia Bells," the former Manager and Treasurer of the St. Charles Borromeo Church Federal Credit Union, was sentenced to 37 months in prison for stealing over \$100,000 of church members' savings and using it for her personal benefit. United States District Judge GERARD E. LYNCH imposed the sentence in Manhattan federal court.

According to the Complaint, the Indictment to which BILLS pleaded guilty, other court documents in this case, and statements made in court proceedings:

BILLS was employed as the Manager and Treasurer of the St. Charles Borromeo Church Federal Credit Union ("Credit Union") in Harlem. As part of her duties, BILLS was responsible for managing deposits and issuing and cashing checks for over 200 members of St. Charles Borromeo Church who deposited their savings at the Credit Union. BILLS was also responsible for maintaining certain of the Credit Union's books and records.

From April 2003 to December 2005, BILLS engaged in an extensive scheme to defraud the Credit Union. Among other things, BILLS caused checks to be issued and drawn on Credit Union funds for her personal use, including to pay BILLS's rent, credit card, automobile insurance, cable television, cellular

telephone and other expenses, and to provide her husband and herself with tens of thousands of dollars in cash. BILLS did so by manipulating church members' accounts, creating a fictitious member account, and improperly recording a variety of transactions. By the time the fraud was uncovered in December 2005, BILLS had stolen over \$100,000 in church members' savings. The fraud resulted in the insolvency and collapse of the St. Charles Borromeo Church Federal Credit Union.

In addition to the 37-month prison term, BILLS was sentenced to four years of supervised release and restitution in the amount of \$135,218.96 to be paid to the National Credit Union Association and its insurer.

In sentencing BILLS, Judge Lunch stated, "This crime is extremely serious," adding that "[t]his was not a petty scheme or impulsive theft" and that "the extent of the embezzlement relative to the size of this institution was truly extraordinary."

BILLS's sentence follows her guilty plea on January 23, 2009, to an Indictment charging her with one count of bank fraud.

Mr. DASSIN praised the work of the FBI in conducting this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney NICOLE W. FRIEDLANDER is in charge of the prosecution.

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